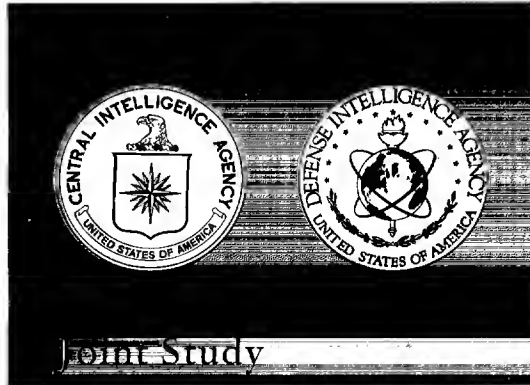


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Communist Violations of the Vietnam and Laos Settlement Agreements and Related Developments

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19 December 1973

Forty-Third Report**COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE VIETNAM AND LAOS
SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS***

(This report covers the week
from 12 December through 18 December 1973)

The Key Points

- The slow pace of troop infiltration continued last week, as only two regular groups were observed in the pipeline.
- The 320B NVA Infantry Division withdrew some time during the past three months from northern South Vietnam to Thanh Hoa Province, North Vietnam. The 341st NVA Division has been reconstituted in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam, adjacent to Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.
- Heavy Communist supply shipments continued and large stocks of ordnance awaited shipment in southern North Vietnam. Considerable vehicle activity was evident in Laos as far south as the tri-border area, but vehicular activity in northern South Vietnam continued to be impeded by poor weather.
- Construction of the new road and the petroleum pipeline in southern Laos continues southward.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.



Preface

This report is the forty-third in a series summarizing evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military materiel toward and into South Vietnam, (II) Communist-initiated combat activity in violation of the Vietnam and Laos settlement agreements, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

There will be no issuance in this series during Christmas week. The next report will be published on Thursday, 3 January.

DETAILS

I. Infiltration and Redeployments of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies

Personnel Infiltration and Redeployments

1. The pace of troop infiltration slowed during the past week as only two regular groups were observed moving in the pipeline. The groups, each containing more than 500 troops, were detected in North Vietnam destined for the western highlands and the COSVN area of South Vietnam.¹ In contrast to the movement of regular combat groups, however, the number of special-purpose group detections increased over those of recent weeks. Between 12 and 18 December, three special-purpose groups totaling more than 125 persons were detected starting southward from North Vietnam, while two other small groups totaling about 25 persons were observed farther south in the infiltration system. Two of these groups are moving to the COSVN area, two to the western highlands, and one to the central coast of South Vietnam.

2. Although the North Vietnamese could still infiltrate large numbers of troops before the end of the dry season, if they were planning an early offensive the rate of troop infiltration probably would have been greater than that observed in recent weeks. As shown in the following table, total troop infiltration since 1 September 1973 is almost one-third lower than during the comparable period last year. Moreover, reversing last year's pattern, most of the troops infiltrating since 1 September have gone to southern Laos and contiguous border areas.

Comparative Starts of Troops
from North Vietnam, by Destination
1 September - 18 December

	1972	1973
Total	44,000	31,000
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	15,000	2,000
MR 5	5,000	2,000
B-3 Front	4,500	1,500
COSVN	9,500	3,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	10,000	22,500

1. One other regular group previously included in our estimate as a "gap-filled" group, destined for southern Laos or adjacent areas, also was detected last week.

3. Recent COMINT indicates that the 320B Infantry Division, with an estimated 6,000 troops, some time during the past three months withdrew from northern South Vietnam to its historical garrison area in Thanh Hoa Province of North Vietnam. This is the third NVA infantry division to return home since the cease-fire, the other two being the 308th and 312th Divisions. Moreover, the move reduces the number of such divisions in the two northern-most provinces of South Vietnam to three -- one less than was there during the early stages of the 1972 Offensive.

4. Although the 320B Division was generally held in reserve and used to protect captured territory during the offensive, its withdrawal reduces the likelihood of an all-out offensive in Military Region (MR) 1 during the next few months. Should Hanoi decide to launch a major offensive in MR 1, however, it has a large reserve force of several divisions (exclusive of the 320B Division) available in North Vietnam, most of which could be dispatched to South Vietnam quickly with little advance warning.

5. After the January cease-fire, Hanoi apparently reactivated a new 341st Division in the North Vietnamese Panhandle. Although intercepted messages referenced a "341st Division" as early as April 1973, it was not until after communication procedures of North Vietnamese units were changed in October that the division itself was identified. Until 1968, when it was probably deactivated, a 341st Division had operated in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam, and elements had operated as far south as northern Quang Tri Province in South Vietnam. The new 341st has as yet only two known subordinate regiments -- the 31st and the 32nd -- and is currently located in the southern part of North Vietnam's Quang Binh Province.²

6. In northern Laos, COMINT indicated that between 8 and 10 December the 15th Engineer Battalion of the 316th Infantry Division withdrew from the Ban Ban area to the major transshipment point at Muong Sen, just across the border in North Vietnam. This is the only battalion of the division which has been identified withdrawing to North Vietnam. Last summer, a 25th Engineer Battalion also returned home, although evidence suggests that it may have since returned to northern Laos. Both units may be engaged in road construction or in moving supplies from North Vietnam to northern Laos because COMINT reveals substantial shipments of supplies moving west on Route 7 toward Laos.

2. Map 515529 shows the current distribution of Communist and South Vietnamese combat forces, by military region, and reflects the deletion of the 320B Division. Because the 341st Division is apparently in the formative stages and has not communicated with the major NVA tactical authority responsible for this area, it has not as yet been included in the CIA/DIA Order of Battle of Communist units targeted against South Vietnam.

Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA¹

185,000

RVNAF²

320,000

MR 1
VC/NVA 87,000
RVNAF 89,000
325th VNMC
324B Airborne
304th 1st
711th 2nd
2nd 3rd
Regional Forces

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions. Although present for duty strength is no longer available, it is estimated to be about 85% of assigned strength.

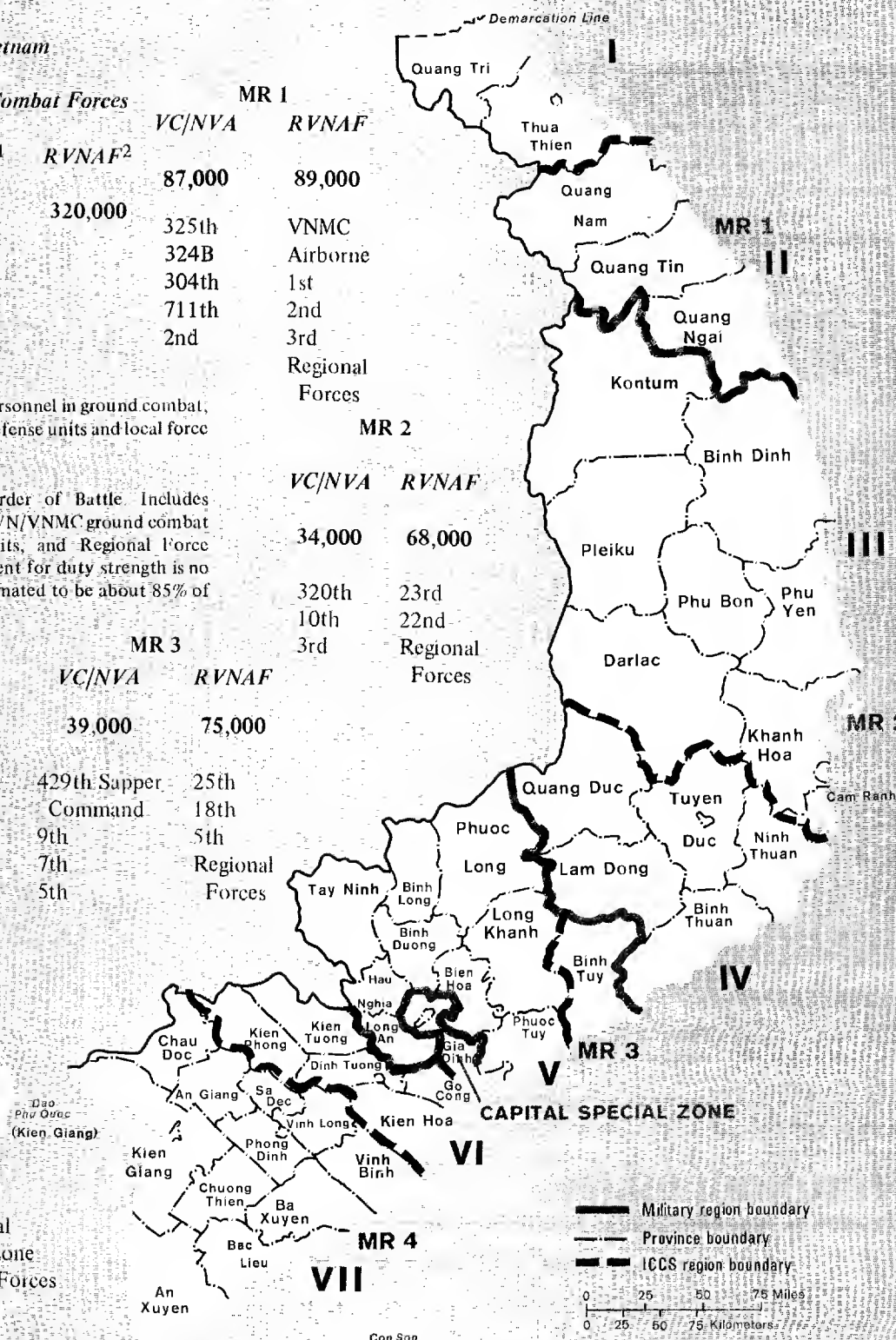
MR 3
VC/NVA 39,000
RVNAF 75,000

429th Sapper Command
9th
7th
5th
25th
18th
5th
Regional Forces

MR 2
VC/NVA 34,000
RVNAF 68,000
320th
10th
3rd
23rd
22nd
Regional Forces

MR 4
VC/NVA 25,000
RVNAF 88,000

1st
21st
9th
7th
44th Special Tactical Zone
Regional Forces



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Movement of Military Equipment and Supplies

North Vietnam

7. Last week, heavy supply shipments continued in southern North Vietnam for the third straight week and large stockpiles of ordnance awaiting shipment were noted throughout the area. In the Vinh area, BT 8 received more than 275 tons of ordnance on 11 December, about half of which was antiaircraft artillery ammunition. During the next three days, the unit shipped nearly 100 tons of cargo to northern Laos and had more than 600 tons remaining to be shipped to that area, including some 115 tons of 130-mm ordnance. On 15 December, the unit reported that it had some 1,100 tons of supplies in storage, including nearly 300 tons of ordnance.

8. To the south, a high level of activity was also noted between Quang Khe and the DMZ. On 15 December, BT 26 reported that it had loaded more than 300 tons of supplies on trucks preparatory to an imminent 10-day supply offensive. Such 10-day "crash" programs have occurred at this time in past years and usually signal the acceleration of supply shipments into Laos. The next day, BT 26 reported that it had shipped 200 tons of ordnance south on three barges, probably as part of this program, and had more than 1,300 tons of cargo in storage. Although the type of stored cargo was not specified, most of it is probably ordnance.

Southern Laos

9. Aerial reconnaissance of the Laotian Panhandle through [] indicated no significant diminution in the volume of heavy truck traffic moving along the new dual-lane road system since [] [] Convoys and parked groups of trucks of up to 100 vehicles continue to be seen along the central and southern sections of the system. The traffic, however, appeared more regularized last week as the number of northbound trucks increased. [] photography reflected little truck traffic moving through the tri-border exit into Kontum Province, although a motorable single-lane road is available. Newly constructed large storage/truck park areas along the new Laotian corridor apparently are being used to stockpile cargos carried south this dry season.

10. Although only sporadic reporting was received, COMINT also confirmed a substantial level of activity in the Laos Panhandle. On 13 December, COMINT revealed that at least several hundred vehicles were active in the Panhandle, including 81 that had arrived at Ban Dan and 47 that had moved to the Group 470 area in the extreme southern Panhandle.

Food and gasoline were the only types of cargo specifically identified on these trucks, although most of the cargo carried by them was unidentified.

11. In addition to this activity, plans to reopen the Mu Gia Pass for cargo shipments from North Vietnam were noted. On 13 December the Commander of the 14th Engineering Regiment was directed to inspect a storage area in the Mu Gia Pass and to prepare for shipments through it. This is the first reference to cargo shipments in this area this dry season, and its timing suggests that it may be related to the 10-day supply offensive scheduled to begin shortly in southern North Vietnam (see paragraph 8, above).

South Vietnam

12. In northern South Vietnam seasonal rains continue to make sections of Route 9 and the Communists' western supply corridor impassable and only light vehicular traffic was detected. Although little activity was noted, there were indications that traffic in some areas was being restricted to periods of darkness. Communist units regularly report on Allied reconnaissance activity and this order, which may pertain to units in Laos as well, could be an attempt to conceal traffic levels.

II. Communist-Initiated Combat Activity in South Vietnam and Laos

South Vietnam

13. In South Vietnam the total number of Communist-initiated cease-fire violations reported by the South Vietnamese Armed Forces since 27 January, since 15 June, and for the last week (12-18 December) are shown below:

Military Region	Total Since 27 January Cease-Fire		Total Since 15 June Cease-Fire		Last Week (12-18 Dec)	
	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor
Total	4,220	27,494	1,851	13,539	43(55) ¹	504 (519) ¹
MR 1	1,514	5,532	489	2,173	14	68
MR 2	703	4,580	439	2,726	7	80
MR 3	641	4,880	239	2,304	11	93
MR 4	1,362	12,502	684	6,336	11	263

1. Figures in parentheses denote totals of the previous week.

14. Some of these violations may have been initiated by South Vietnamese forces rather than Communist forces, and it is impossible in all cases to determine the actual instigator. The tabulation above and the charts following the Annex, however, show fairly accurately the trend in the amount of combat that has occurred in South Vietnam since the cease-fire. The fact that a combat incident occurred at a particular time and place is generally reported accurately by the South Vietnamese, even though the question of who started it may not always be treated objectively.

Laos

15. There was no significant military activity in Laos last week.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

Communists Continue Road and Pipeline Construction

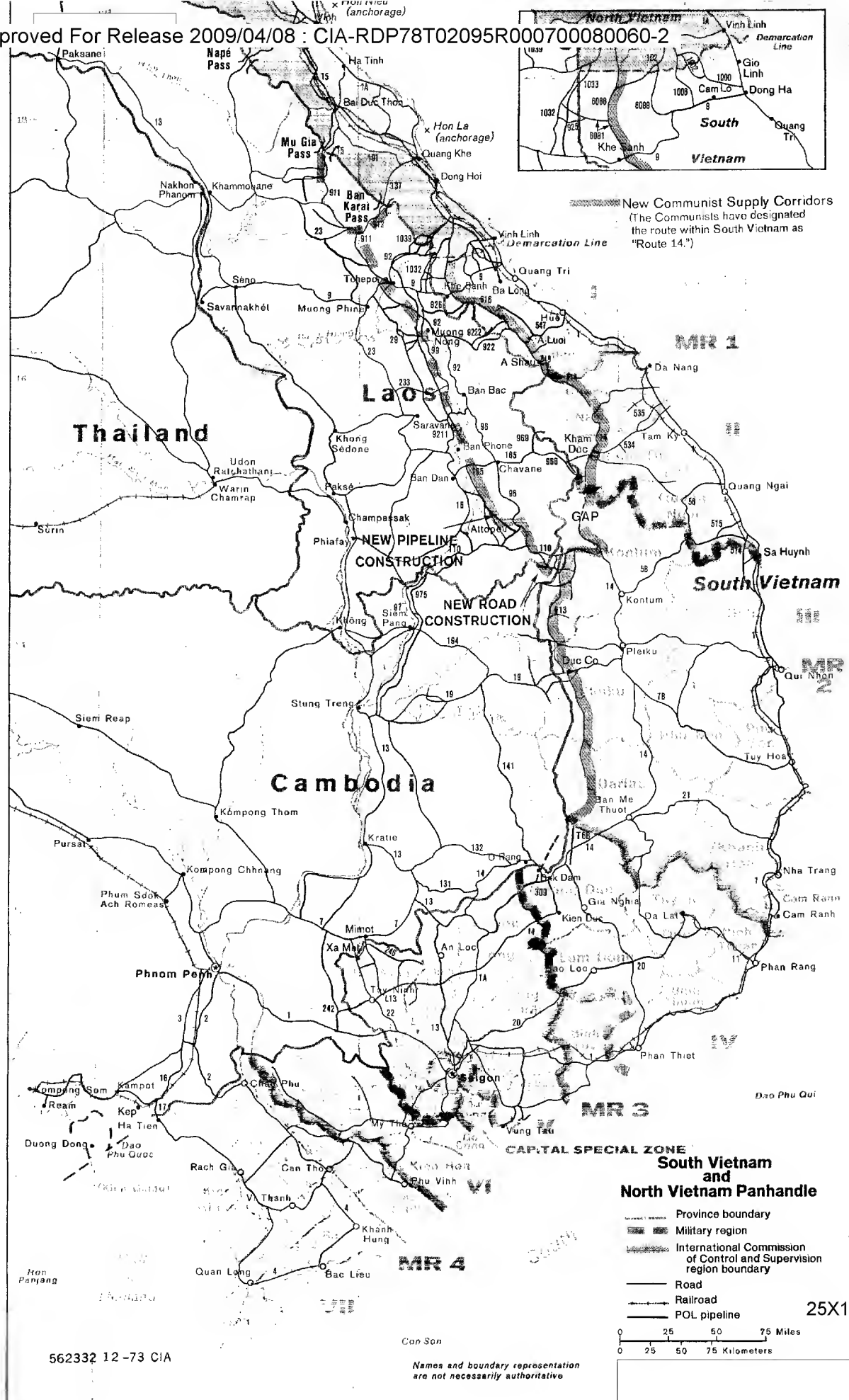
16. Aerial photography [] shows Communist construction crews working on the final gaps separating the Laotian dual-lane road and its companion system, Route 14, running along the western South Vietnamese border. The photography shows that about 10 miles of new dual-lane road have recently been cleared through the tri-border area (see map 562332). Gaps totaling another 10-12 miles still have to be filled before the two systems are joined, but with the aid of bulldozers and large work crews, these probably can be finished by the end of the year. A motorable single-lane road already connects the two routes, but appears to be used only for construction and communications traffic.

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17. The same photography also indicated that the Communists are extending their petroleum pipeline system through the southern Laotian Panhandle, paralleling the new dual-lane road leading into the tri-border area. New clearing and sections of pipe were observed from a point some 30 miles south of the last known terminus, extending about 17 miles farther south along the eastern edge of the dual-lane road to within 30 miles of the tri-border. Although most of the 30-mile distance separating the old terminus and the new construction activity probably is connected with pipeline - several camouflaged 2,500-gallon pol storage tanks have been discovered beside the new road south of the old pipeline terminus - jungle cover precludes confirmation.

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ANNEX

INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL
TO THE SOUTH

1. On 16 December, Group 3008, destined for the B-3 Front, was detected in the BT 8 area near Vinh, North Vietnam. Although this group was held back for two days, it has now been sent south. On 19 December, Group 2035, destined for the COSVN area, also was detected at BT 8, but it is uncertain whether this group has yet begun to move southward. Group 5094, which had been included in our estimate previously as a "gap-filled" group, also was referenced in intercepted enemy communications last week. In addition, special-purpose groups M344, M345 -- destined for the B-3 Front -- M426, M432 -- en route to the COSVN area -- and Z101 -- moving to VC Military Region 5 -- were detected last week. Groups M344, M345, and M432 were noted in the BT 8 area, and Groups M426 and Z101 were observed in southern Laos. Although Group Z101 is known to comprise high-ranking personnel, the compositions of the M-prefixed groups are unknown.

2. Since the 15 June "second cease-fire," more than 39,000 North Vietnamese have infiltrated southward, including over 37,000 combat troops and more than 2,000 specialists. Since the 27 January agreement, about 89,000 personnel have infiltrated southward, including about 81,000 combat troops and more than 8,000 specialists. Some 64,000 have started south since 27 January, while 25,000 were in the pipeline moving southward as of that date. The following table shows the number of North Vietnamese infiltrators starting south, by month and destination, since 1 January 1973.

Number of Troops Entering the Pipeline Destined
for South Vietnam, Southern Laos, and Cambodia
Since 1 January 1973¹

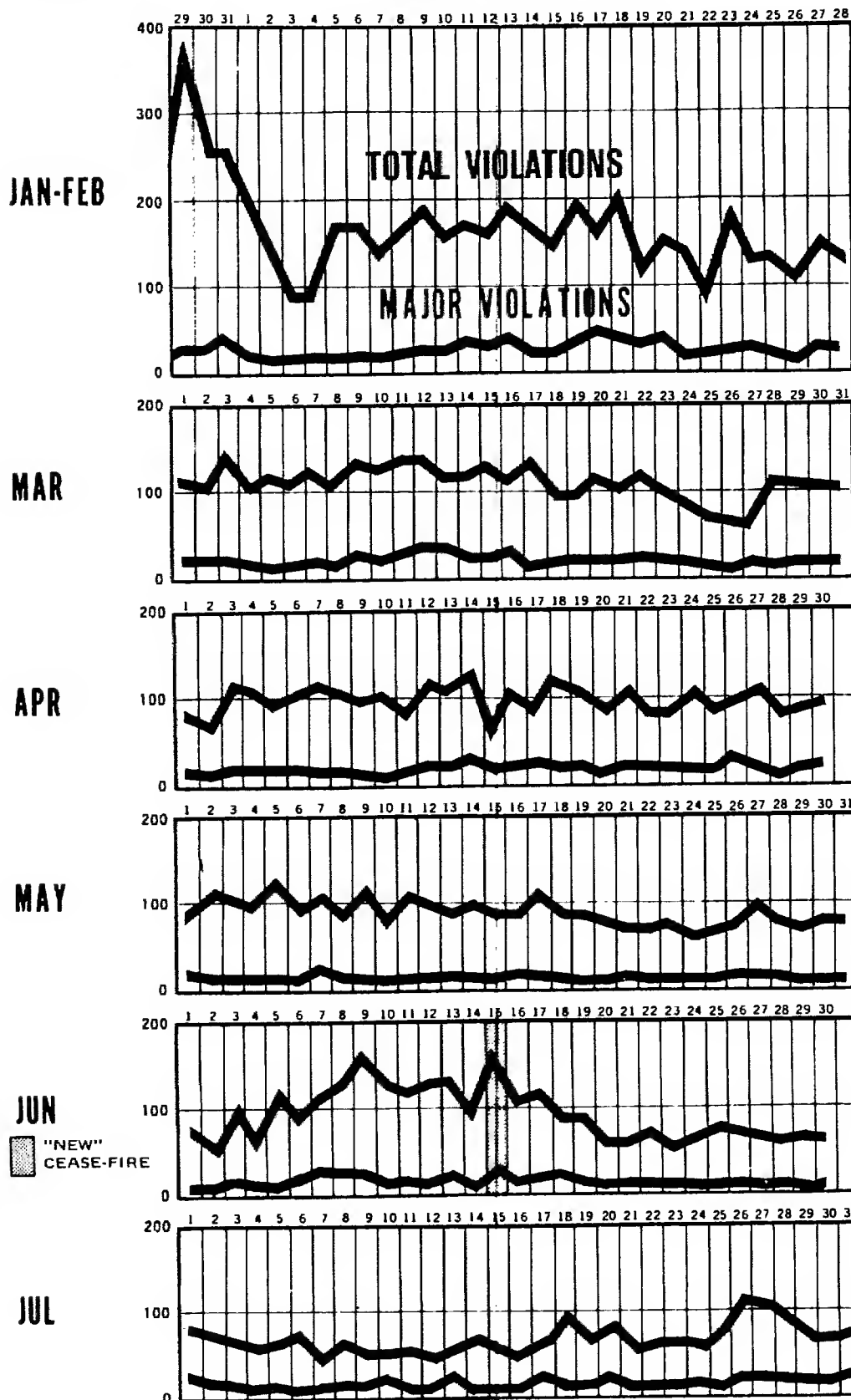
	COSVN	B-3 Front	MR 5	MR Tri-Thien-Hue	Southern Laos/ MR 559	Total
Total	16,000	7,000	9,000	14,000	26,500	72,500
Jan	7,000	5,000	4,000	2,500	....	18,500
Feb	5,000	500	....	1,500	1,000	8,000
Mar	....	....	....	1,000	....	1,000
Apr	1,000	....	....	....	....	1,000
May	....	....	....	7,000	....	7,000
Jun	....	....	....	....	1,500	1,500
Jul	....	....	3,000	....	....	3,000
Aug	....	....	....	....	1,500	1,500
Sep	....	....	2,000	2,000	3,000	7,000
Oct	....	....	....	....	14,000	14,000
Nov	1,000	1,000	....	....	5,500	7,500
Dec 1-18	2,000	500	....	....	....	2,500

1. Excludes special-purpose personnel. The totals are rounded to the nearest 500.



CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

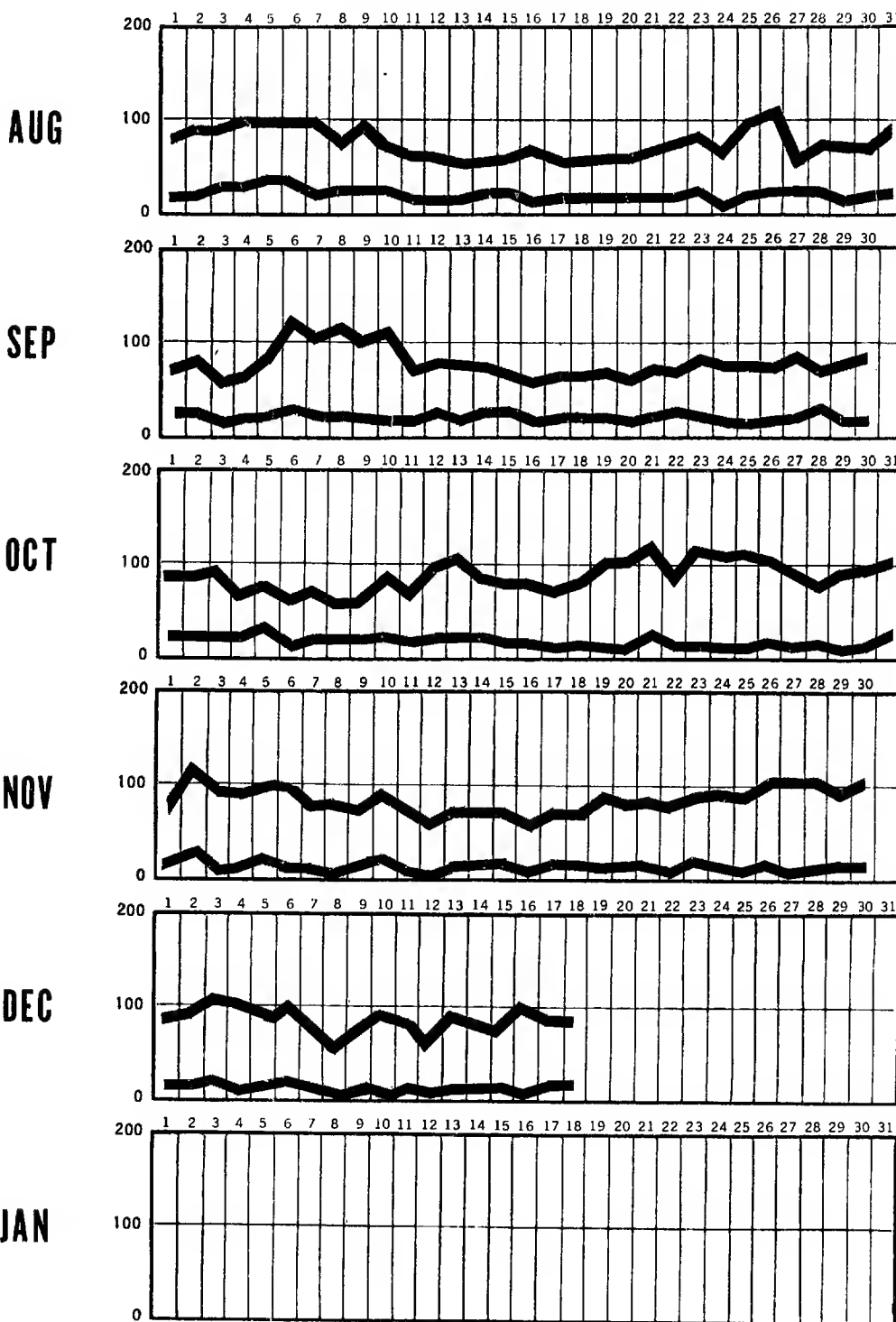
(28 JANUARY THROUGH 31 JULY 1973)





CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

(1 AUGUST 1973 TO THE PRESENT)



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